Clean Copy of the Specification

1. Field of Invention

[0001] The present invention relates generally to the field of infant care and more particularly to devices that provide for the "hands free" feeding of babies.

2. Background Information

[0002] In the past, various devices and methods have been used and proposed to assist in the feeding of babies. However, these devices and methods have significant limitations and shortcomings. Prior art structures are generally complex, cumbersome to use, or expensive. Moreover, none disclose a portable device for hands-free bottle feeding of an infant. The busy lifestyle of the modern parents which include commuting and transporting the family has increased the necessity for a device which will permit the baby to feed himself while the care-giver is otherwise engaged. For example, while driving the family car, the baby often drops the bottle and begins crying when he can not feed himself. The care giver cannot look for the dropped bottle while driving. Therefore, a need exists for a hands-free device which is attached to the baby and secures the baby bottle in a position which will enable the flow of the milk or other liquid.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] A baby bottle holder secures the bottle in a convenient hands-free position and holds the bottle an angle which allows a baby to receive liquid. The baby bottle holder is removably attached to a bib or other suitable article of clothing worn by the baby. The bottle is removably engaged by the baby bottle holder. At least one strap may be employed to fasten the bottle to the baby bottle holder.

[0004] In the preferred embodiment, the baby bottle holder of the present invention includes a holder or support made of pliant but firm material, such a foam. The holder or support removably engages the bottle. The support holds the bottle and at least one strap forms an attachment which affixes the holder to the baby's clothing, such as a bib. The foam support may be rectangular or

block-shaped as shown in Fig 2 and Fig. 3; however, it will be appreciated that a variety of different shapes may be utilized to secure the bottle in position. An opening or concavity is carved in the support holder which may advantageously be a semicircular, with a diameter selected to snugly grip the bottle. The concavity is placed at a height selected so that when the bottle is received by the support, the bottle can be placed at an angle using gravitational force to cause the milk to flow into the baby's mouth or tilted backward so that the liquid is not flowing. When the bottle is placed at the correct angle, the caregiver may then use the straps to further secure the bottle in the desired position.

[0005] In another embodiment, the holder may also be a frame which includes a top surface, a bottom surface, a long axis, a first end and a second end.

[0008] At least one strap may be used to retain a cradled baby bottle within the baby bottle holder. Each strap has a first end and a second end. The first end of each strap may be attached to the first edge the support in any suitable location. The second end of each strap is attached to the second edge of the support by a fastening mechanism to hold the baby bottle to the support when the neck of the bottle is removably engaged with the neck support. The straps may be attached to each other securing the bottle by hook and loop("Velcro®") material or any other suitable fastening mechanism.

[0009] The support bottle holder may be affixed to an article of the baby's clothing such as a bib, shirt or dress or the support may stand alone. Affixing the support to the baby's clothing reduces the likelihood that the bottle will be lost, dropped or otherwise separated from the baby. The support may be removably attached to the baby's clothing using a number of commonly known materials, such as with a hook and loop material (Velcro®) or snaps.

[0010] In a preferred embodiment, the straps are attached to the baby's clothing while at same time being attached to the support such the straps are placed between the clothing and the support. However, the support may also be directly attached to the clothing and the straps attached to clothing in another position towards the bottom of the bottle. In yet another

embodiment, it is not necessary for the straps to be attached to the clothing, the first strap and the second strap are simply affixed to each other around the support and the bottle.

[0020] A baby bottle holder 110 is shown as it is used by a baby in Figure 1. The holder 110 includes a support 114 made from a pliant material such a foam or rubber. Applicant has discovered that the best material for the holder is closed cell foam which is soft, so as not to injure the baby, and which repels moisture and is easily cleaned. The holder 110 is formed with an opening or concavity to removably receive the bottle.

[0021] In a preferred embodiment the holder adapted to removably attach to the baby's clothing such as a bib 116 so that the baby does not drop or lose his bottle and commence crying. However, it is also possible for the holder to stand alone and not be attached to an article of clothing.

[0022] The holder 114 forms a grip for receiving the bottle 112 and because it is made of pliant material, foam being the preferred material, bottles of various sizes may be used with the holder. Pliant material is also important so as not to cause injury to the baby as may occur with a rigid material.

[0023] In a preferred embodiment, the holder is rectangular in shape, however, a number of different shapes for the holder may be effectively utilized. Referring to Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, the support grip 114 includes a front surface 126, a back surface 128, first surface 130, second surface 132, upper surface 134 and bottom surface 136.

[0024] An opening, shown as concavity 138 in Figure 4, is formed between upper surface 134 and 136 and between first surface 130 and second surface 132 which extends from the front surface 126 through the back surface 128. The concavity forms lips 163 and 134 from the upper surface 134 of the holder as best shown in Figure 4.

[0025] Lips 163 and 134 formed by the upper surface 134 of the support grip 114 secure the bottle in a position for a baby or other user. The combination of first surface 130 and lip 163 may also be considered as an arm, together with an arm created by second surface 132 and lip 135, serves to secure the bottle within the opening or concavity 138. The opening or concavity having the lips 163 and 134 is formed to envelope the outer surface of the bottle.

[0026] As discussed previously, the opening may be formed in a number of different shapes (a

modified U-shape is shown in Figures 2 and 4) as desired by the user and the type of bottle being utilized. The opening or concavity 138 may be inclined at various angles relative to the bottom surface 136 in order to tilt the bottle so that the nipple 160 is in the desired position e.g. in the baby's mouth 162.

[0027] To provide further security in holding the bottle within the holder, first strap 118 and second end 120 may be utilized. It will be appreciated that there are a number of different ways to use the straps to secure the bottle within the holder. In the preferred embodiment shown in Figures 1, 2, and 4, first strap 118 has a first end 144 and a second end 146. Second strap 120 has a first end 150 and a second end 152. The first ends 144 and 150 of the first and second straps, respectively, may be affixed to each other using a number of conventional fastening mechanisms.

[0028] In the preferred embodiment shown, the first end 144 of the first strap 120 is attached to the first end 150 of the second strap with hook and loop material (Velcro®). If it is desired to have the holder removably attached to the baby's bib, the bottom surface 136 of the support 114 is supplied with hook and loop material 122 and 158, as shown in Figure 3, to be removably affixed to the hook and loop material provided on the surface of the bib 116.

[0029] These and other features and advantages of this invention will become further apparent from the detailed description and accompanying figures that follow. In the figures and description, numerals indicate the various features of the invention, like numerals referring to like features throughout both the drawings and the description.